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Liza Kuecker

Judith A. Harris

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## Where do They Stand? Gender Differences in the Attitudes of South Carolina Elected Officials

### Erratum

The first page of this article is misnumbered as page 23, and should have been listed as page 25. No content was lost due to this mistake.

# Where do They Stand?

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE ATTITUDES OF SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTED OFFICIALS

**Liza Kuecker**

Montana State University at Billings

**Judith A. Harris<sup>1</sup>**

University of South Carolina Spartanburg

*We surveyed elected officials in South Carolina to see if there were differences between men and women in their attitudes on twelve issues involving crime, morals, and civil rights. We find statistically significant gender differences on four of the issues. The nonsignificant differences on the remaining eight issues were in the expected direction with a higher proportion of women than men giving "liberal" responses. We discuss the policy implications of this gender gap if increasing proportions of women continue to be elected to public office.*

**T**o what extent do women in elective public office make a difference? Do they bring a woman's perspective to public issues and policy agendas? Do they give a voice to a previously unrepresented constituency? Do their views and activities as public officials follow the same patterns as those of men? The gender gap, the small but consistent 5 to 10% difference between

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women's and men's political attitudes, preferences, and behaviors, has been discussed, debated, and studied since 1980. Although the gender gap in political views and voting behavior has been noted since the 1950s (Rossi 1983), it was not until the presidential election of 1980, in which Reagan received 56% of the male vote compared with 47% of the female vote, that the gender gap emerged as a prominent issue (Mansbridge 1985). The gender gap has been explained by the tendency of women to affiliate with the Democratic party, to vote for democratic candidates, to hold liberal views on a variety of political and social issues, and to maintain feminist values (Cook 1992; Conover 1988; Rossi 1983; Rapoport, Stone, and Abramowitz 1990; Mansbridge 1985; Mueller 1991). On the other hand, Wirls (1986) suggests that both men and women are defecting to the Republican party and adopting conservative views. The gender gap, he argues, results from the higher rate of defection by men and a smaller rate of defection by women. Wilcox, Brown, and Powell (1993), in studying financial contributors to the 1988 presidential campaign, found a gender gap in both the Republican and Democratic parties, but the gap was in the opposite direction for each party: democratic women were more liberal than democratic men, while republican women were more conservative than Republican men. However, since religious conservative Pat Robertson seemed to have a special appeal to republican women, Wilcox *et al.* found that after omitting contributors to Robertson's campaign from their analysis, republican women were more liberal than Republican men.

Cook and Wilcox (1991) found that feminism has an impact on the political values of both men and women, including support for gender equality and support for liberal policies promoting equality. They compared the views of feminist men and women, potentially feminist men and women, and non-feminist men and women. They found a gender gap in political views for all three groups. However,

for each of the three groups, the nature and size of the gender gap varied across issues. They concluded that there is a complex relationship between gender, feminism, and policy attitudes. Feminism, they concluded, does not explain the gender gap.

Clark and Clark (1996) argue that the gender gap is the cumulative result of a set of overlapping concerns held by various groups of women, feminists and nonfeminists alike. Although they found a strong and consistent cleavage between feminists and antifeminists on attitudes toward various cultural and economic issues, they also identified a significant group of women who do not appear committed to either side. The views of these women in the middle are likely to influence the size of the gender gap over the next few years.

Race is another factor thought to influence the gender gap. Welch and Sigelman (1989) found no gender gap in political attitudes among blacks. They suggested that race is a more salient variable for most blacks than is gender. Prestage (1991) also found no gender gap among blacks. At the same time, however, black women are highly supportive of women's issues (as are black men).

The research reported here is a further investigation of the gender gap in political attitudes. Our paper focuses on issues related to crime, morals, and civil rights among elected officials in South Carolina. The south is known for its traditional political culture (Black and Black 1987), a culture that implies that there would be little difference between the attitudes and views of women and men.<sup>2</sup> However, there is tentative evidence of both traditional and liberal perspectives among Southern women and men (Wolfe 1991; Ellis

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<sup>2</sup>For discussions of the traditionalistic political culture in South Carolina, see Daniel J. Elazar, "Series Introduction" in Graham and Moore, *South Carolina Government and Politics*. Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1994: pp. xxix-xxxii; and Charles W. Dunn, "Gatekeepers of a Changing Culture: The General Assembly of South Carolina," *The Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 24, 1996.



and Hawks 1986). The gender gap may be greater in the south, especially among Democrats, than in other parts of the country (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1987).

In addition, race has historically been of major importance in southern politics (Key 1949; Cohodas 1993) and may still play a significant role (Black and Black, 1987; Lamis 1990). Race may be a variable of particular salience in South Carolina, which has a population that is 30% black.

By examining the extent of the gender gap among South Carolina elected officials, we hope to shed light on factors that may contribute to differences in their political views. Specifically we examine whether there is a gender gap among both black and white elected officials. In addition, we examine the extent and direction of the gender gap when taking into account age, religious affiliation, party affiliation, and the self-identification as liberal, moderate, or conservative. If men and women have different views on the issues and if they act in accord with those views, then the gender gap—especially among elected officials—may have major implications for legislation and public policy.

## METHODOLOGY

We compiled a list of all elected officials in South Carolina at the federal, state, county, and local levels of government, including school board members. We divided the list by gender. From each gender we drew a random sample of 200 officials. The process produced a total sample of 400. We mailed questionnaires to the sample in July 1992 with a follow-up mailing about a month later. A total of 111 women and 104 men returned completed questionnaires giving us a total response rate of almost 54% with a response rate of about 56% for women and 52% for men.

Table 1 reports demographic data for the respondents. The majority of male and female elected officials are white (84%). Most were born (73%) and/or reared (83%) in South Carolina. Most grew up in a small town, small city, or rural environment (82%). About 74% of the respondents have an educational level of at least some college/technical training. Most have family incomes above the state average, and identify as Baptists (44%), Methodists (22%), or Presbyterian (about 13%). Weekly church attendance is the norm. As would be expected, most of the respondents hold office at the county, local, or school board level. Fewer than 7% of the men and fewer than 4% of the women in the sample hold state or federal elective offices.

Women differ from men in that three-quarters of the women are relative newcomers to elective office as compared with one-half of the men. Women are more likely to be affiliated with the Democratic party than are men. Like women, blacks are comparative newcomers compared with whites and they are much more likely than whites to identify themselves as Democrats.

The most significant difference between the genders is their political ideology. Almost 48% of men and 34% of women identify themselves as "conservative," 51% of men and 54% of women as "moderate," and 1% of men and 12% of women as "liberal." In short, women are less likely than men to call themselves "conservative" and more likely to call themselves "liberal." Given the variation in ideology, it is reasonable to expect a gender gap on the issues selected for this paper.<sup>3</sup>

We base our definitions of "liberal" and "conservative" on those presented by Benson and Williams (1982) in their book,

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<sup>3</sup>The self-identification of respondents as conservative, moderate, or liberal should not be confused with our operationalization of conservative and liberal responses to the 12 attitude statements.

**TABLE 1**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**  
 (in percents)

	Male	Female
<b>Total Sample</b>	48.4	51.6
<b>Race</b>		
White	85.6	80.1
Black	12.5	18.9
Other	16.7	24.8
<b>Religion</b>		
Baptist	42.3	45.0
Methodist	24.0	19.8
Presbyterian	16.7	10.1
Other	32.7	33.3
<b>Age</b>		
23-52	46.2	56.8
53-82	50.0	35.1
<b>Political Party</b>		
Republican	24.0	28.8
Democratic	40.4	52.2
Independent	28.8	12.6
Other/none	6.7	54.1
<b>Political Ideology</b>		
Conservative	48.8	33.3
Moderate	51.0	54.1
Liberal	1.0	12.6
<b>Size of Town Where Raised</b>		
Rural/small town/ small city	86.4	77.6
Suburb/large city/ very large city	13.6	22.4
<b>Current Office</b>		
Federal or State	6.7	3.6
County/Local/ School Board	92.3	95.5

**Note:** percents may not sum to 100 due to nonresponses and rounding.



*Religion on Capitol Hill.* "Conservative" responses favor limited government, the preservation of traditional values such as individualism, family, and hard work, and a commitment to national defense. Political conservatives see government expenditures for social programs as extravagant, ineffective, and a waste of taxpayers' money. "Liberal" responses favor an active government seeking to spread economic and social benefits, seeking to change social structures that create social "victims," and putting less emphasis on military preparedness. Political liberals see government expenditures for social programs as a necessary means of dealing with social problems. Since only one man identified himself as "liberal," we did not include the "liberal" subcategory in our tables. In comparing our subjects' responses we assess the proportion of liberal and conservative responses in each category of respondents for each issue. (See the Appendix for the operationalization of conservative and liberal responses to each statement.)

We compared women and men on 12 attitudinal statements to which they could respond "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." We collapsed the data into two categories, "agree" and "disagree." The statements are presented in Table 2. The relationships in the data were tested using the Chi-square test statistic. The statistic was performed on the observed frequencies.

## FINDINGS

**Crime.** The figures in Table 2 show that most of the men and women in the sample and in each subgroup agree with each of the three statements dealing with issues related to crime. There are, however, differences in the size of the majority in each subgroup.

TABLE 2  
PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING

	There is too much concern in court for criminals.			Laws covering the sale of handguns should be made more strict.		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
<i>Total Sample</i>	79.4	71.1	8.3	70.8	82.7	11.9*
<b>Race</b>						
White	83.9	76.4	-7.5	66.0	79.5	13.5*
Black	61.6	52.3	-9.3	100.0	95.2	-4.8
<b>Religion</b>						
Baptist	77.3	88.0	10.7	63.6	82.0	18.4*
Methodist	79.2	68.2	-11.0	91.6	86.4	-5.2
<b>Age</b>						
53-82 yrs.	88.0	77.5	-10.5	70.6	94.9	24.3†
23-52 yrs.	72.9	69.8	-3.1	70.8	74.6	3.8
<b>Political Party</b>						
Republican	69.5	81.2	11.7	58.3	65.6	7.3
Democrat	76.0	66.0	-10.0	81.0	88.0	7.0
Independent	90.0	78.5	-11.5	70.0	93.0	23.0
<b>Political Ideology</b>						
Conservative	83.7	86.5	2.8	59.2	70.3	11.1
Moderate	75.0	70.0	-5.0	81.1	86.4	5.3
	Addressing social problems is a better way of reducing crime than increasing law enforcement.			The government should ignore homosexual relationships between consenting adults.		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
<i>Total Sample</i>	84.3	95.48	11.1†	41.7	60.6	18.9†
<b>Race</b>						
White	82.8	95.3	12.5†	40.9	58.5	17.6
Black	92.3	95.2	2.9	53.8	66.7	12.9
<b>Religion</b>						
Baptist	75.0	95.9	20.9†	36.4	51.1	14.7
Methodist	95.8	100.0	4.2	29.2	71.4	42.2†
<b>Age</b>						
53-82 yrs.	88.2	94.9	6.7	31.4	51.3	19.9
23-52 yrs.	81.2	95.1	13.9 *	52.0	65.0	13.0
<b>Political Party</b>						
Republican	71.0	93.0	22.0 *	41.6	56.2	14.6
Democrat	88.0	98.0	10.0 *	54.7	62.9	8.2
Independent	86.6	84.6	-2.0	30.0	61.5	31.5 *
<b>Political Ideology</b>						
Conservative	79.2	94.4	15.2	38.7	63.6	24.9 *
Moderate	88.7	96.5	7.8	43.3	56.1	12.8

TABLE 2:  
PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING (continued)

	Sexual relationships outside of marriage are wrong.			South Carolina should have a legal lottery.		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
<i>Total Sample</i>	86.3	81.5	-4.8	62.1	72.9	10.8
<b>Race</b>						
White	86.4	78.2	-8.2	61.4	70.8	9.4
Black	84.6	95.2	10.6	69.2	85.7	16.5
<b>Religion</b>						
Baptist	90.9	94.0	3.1	59.1	74.0	14.9
Methodist	92.0	77.0	-15.0	70.8	68.2	-2.6
<b>Age</b>						
53-82 yrs.	86.5	78.9	-7.6	58.8	72.5	13.7
23-52 yrs.	85.1	80.9	-4.2	68.7	71.4	2.7
<b>Political Party</b>						
Republican	88.0	81.2	-6.8	58.3	71.8	13.5
Democrat	88.0	80.7	-7.3	59.5	76.2	16.7
Independent	86.6	85.7	-0.9	70.0	57.1	-12.9
<b>Political Ideology</b>						
Conservative	90.0	86.0	-4.0	61.2	70.2	9.0
Moderate	82.6	81.3	-1.3	62.2	75.0	12.8
	Unfair preference is given in hiring blacks.			Unfair preference is given in hiring women.		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
<i>Total Sample</i>	69.0	62.0	-7.0	52.5	49.5	-3.0
<b>Race</b>						
White	74.1	65.5	-8.6	54.8	46.5	-8.3
Black	38.5	52.4	13.9	38.5	66.6	28.1
<b>Religion</b>						
Baptist	64.3	72.0	7.7	47.6	62.0	14.4
Methodist	87.5	59.1	-28.4*	70.8	45.4	-25.4
<b>Age</b>						
53-82 yrs.	73.5	52.6	-20.9*	52.0	47.4	-4.6
23-52 yrs.	68.7	33.3*	-35.4†	56.5	50.0	-6.5
<b>Political Party</b>						
Republican	62.5	65.6	3.1	50.0	46.9	-3.1
Democrat	70.0	52.6	17.4	47.5	45.6	-1.9
Independent	72.4	85.7	13.3	60.7	76.9	16.2
<b>Political Ideology</b>						
Conservative	67.3	55.5	-11.8	55.3	41.6	-13.7
Moderate	72.0	69.5	-2.5	51.0	53.4	2.4

TABLE 2:  
PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING (continued)

	Black gains come at white expense.			A woman has the right to decide on abortion.		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
<i>Total Sample</i>	46.5	38.3	-8.2	68.6	79.8	11.2
<b>Race</b>						
White	49.4	46.0	-3.4	65.5	76.4	10.9
Black	23.0	0.0	-23.0 *	84.6	95.0	10.4
<b>Religion</b>						
Baptist	44.2	42.0	-2.2	65.1	77.5	12.4
Methodist	66.6	31.8	-34.8 *	70.8	95.4	24.6*
<b>Age</b>						
53-82 yrs.	48.0	26.3	-21.7 *	29.4	90.0	60.6‡
23-52 yrs.	45.8	42.8	-3.0	68.0	73.0	5.0
<b>Political Party</b>						
Republican	50.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	59.4	9.4
Democrat	42.8	27.6	-15.2	85.4	91.4	6.0
Independent	44.8	46.1	1.3	63.3	78.6	15.3
<b>Political Ideology</b>						
Conservative	51.0	38.9	-12.1	54.2	67.6	13.4
Moderate	42.3	44.1	1.8	81.1	84.7	3.6
	A woman's place is in the home.			Hard work pays off.		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
<i>Total Sample</i>	31.7	20.2	-11.5	96.1	88.0	-8.1*
<b>Race</b>						
White	34.9	20.5	-14.4 *	98.9	89.8	-9.1†
Black	7.7	14.3	6.6	76.9	85.0	8.1
<b>Religion</b>						
Baptist	25.6	22.4	-3.2	93.2	88.0	-5.2
Methodist	29.2	22.7	-6.5	100.0	90.5	-9.5
<b>Age</b>						
53-82 yrs.	28.5	12.5	-16.0	98.0	84.6	-13.4*
23-52 yrs.	35.4	22.5	-12.9	93.7	90.3	-3.4
<b>Political Party</b>						
Republican	43.5	37.5	-6.0	96.0	93.7	-2.3
Democrat	21.4	13.8	-7.6	92.8	80.7	-12.1
Independent	34.5	14.3	-20.2	100.0	100.0	0.0
<b>Political Ideology</b>						
Conservative	34.7	37.8	3.1	96.0	97.3	1.3
Moderate	29.4	11.9	-17.5 *	96.2	84.5	-11.7 *

\* p = .05;

†p = .01;

‡p = .001



The figures show a gender gap for some groups on some issues. There is no statistically significant difference in level of agreement between men and women, for example, about whether "there is too much concern in court for criminals." The differences are, however, in the expected direction with men more likely to give conservative responses than women. Among Baptists, republicans, and conservatives, however, women give more conservative responses than do men.

Clearer evidence of a gender gap appears in the figures on handgun control. Women are significantly more likely than men to favor stricter handgun laws. The greatest difference between women and men is in the age group 53 to 83 years old where more 24% more women than men favor stricter regulation of handgun sales. Among Independents, 23% more women than men to support handgun regulation. Only black men and Methodist men are more likely than women support stricter handgun sale regulation. White men are less likely than white women and black women and black men to agree that stricter regulation of handgun sales is needed. Nisbett and Cohen (1996) argue that white southern men are more opposed to gun control than northerners because they view their guns as essential to self-protection.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the data show no significant difference on attitudes toward handgun sales regulation among black men and women officials. All of the black men and all except one black woman favored stricter regulation of handgun sales. Black men are substantially over represented as victims of handgun violence, which may account for the virtually unanimous support of gun control laws among our black elected officials.

The same pattern is evident in responses to the statement that "addressing social problems is a better way of reducing crime

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<sup>4</sup>They also indicate that white southern women are more likely than northern women to oppose gun control (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

than increasing law enforcement." Women in the total sample and all subgroups except one give more liberal responses than the men. The greatest difference is between republican men and women, with 22% more women agreeing that addressing social problems is a better way to reduce crime than increased law enforcement. Similarly, almost 21% more Baptist women elected officials than Baptist men officials see addressing social problems as more effective in dealing with crime than law enforcement. The only exception is among independents where the men are 2% less likely than the women to give more precedence to law enforcement.

The data do not show significant differences between men and women on concern for criminals. Both genders respond conservatively to questions dealing with crime. The difference between men and women officials on the usefulness of addressing social problems to prevent crime may be explained by women's propensity to offer assistance for overcoming and preventing behavior problems compared with men's propensity to take a disciplinary approach against misbehavior. Since both approaches involve public agencies (social service/educational agencies or law enforcement agencies) and taxpayers' money, we cannot explain the gender difference by the philosophical difference between liberals (advocates of government action to solve problems) and conservatives (advocates of limited government action).

**Morals.** The gender gap is clear for the statement "The government should ignore homosexual relationships between consenting adults." For the total sample, more than 60% of the women agree that the government should ignore homosexual relationships between consenting adults while fewer than 42% of the men agree. The gender gap of almost 19% is statistically significant at the .01 level. Women in all categories are more likely to agree that the government should ignore homosexual relationships between consenting adults. The gap is also statistically significant among whites, Methodists, independents, and conservatives. The gap

between male and female Methodists, for example, is more than 42%; between male and female independents, the gap is almost 32%. The smallest gap, more than 8%, is between democratic men and women elected officials.

On the other hand, both genders give overwhelmingly conservative responses to the other morals issue, "sexual relationships outside of marriage are wrong." More than 80% of both men and women and more than 75% of each subgroup "agree" sexual relationships outside marriage are wrong. Although none of the gender differences is statistically significant, most figures show women to be more tolerant of sex outside marriage while men are more conservative. Black women and Baptist women are more conservative than their male counterparts by almost 11% and 3%, respectively.

There are no statistically significant differences between men and women on the whether "South Carolina should have a legal lottery." Substantial percentage differences exist, however. Among blacks, for example, women are almost 17% more likely to favor a legal lottery, a nearly identical gap to that between democratic men and women. The figures show that major political party is almost unimportant in predicting differences between men and women; the gap is between almost 14% (among republicans) and 17% (among democrats). Among independents, however, men are more willing to support a legal state lottery; 70% of men who call themselves independent favor a lottery compared with 57% of women independents.

**Civil Rights.** Among the total sample, almost 70% of the men and 62% of the women elected officials agreed that "unfair preference is given in hiring blacks." The gender gap is most evident in the connection between race and hiring practices where between younger men and women, those aged 23 to 52 years old, it is statistically significant at the .001 level. Among that group, 35% more men than women agree that unfair preference is given to



blacks. Similarly, Methodist men are more than 28% more likely than Methodist women to perceive unfair preference in racial hiring. Since black men and women would be less likely than whites to agree that unfair preference is given to the hiring of blacks, it is surprising that a majority of black women agree that unfair preference is given to hiring blacks.

Although the gender gap is smaller in attitudes toward hiring practices for women, almost 53% of the men and almost 50% of the women agreed that "unfair preference is given in hiring women." The largest difference is among black women. Over 28% more black women than black men "agree" that women are given unfair preference in hiring. Interestingly, the proportion of black men elected officials who think unfair preference in hiring is given to either blacks or to women is identical, about 39%. However, the proportion of black women who feel women are given an unfair preference is more than 14% greater than the percent of black women who feel blacks are given an unfair hiring advantage. The larger percentage of black women agreeing to the statement may reflect the history and nature of black women's employment as compared with that of white women and black men (Feagin and Feagin 1993; Andersen 1993).

Almost 47% of the men elected officials agree that "black gains come at white expense." Fewer women officials, only 38%, agree that blacks gain at the expense of whites, a gender gap of 8%. Only 23% of black men agree that blacks gain at the expense of whites; no black women agreed. This finding was significant at the .05 level. The data also show almost no gender gap between white men and white women in their agreement that blacks gain at white expense; just over 49% of white men "agree" and 46% of white women "agree." The percentage of white men and women agreeing is much greater than the percentage of black men and women agreeing. A gender gap was significant among the subgroups of Methodists where almost 35% more men than women agree that



blacks benefit at the expense of whites, and among respondents aged 53 to 82 years old where almost 22% more men than women officials agree.

The majority of respondents agree that "a women has the right to decide on abortion." Gender differences were found, however. Women are more likely than men to support a woman's right to choose abortion. Among those 53 to 82 years old, the difference is more than 60%; among Methodists, the difference is almost 25%. Black respondents of both genders and democrats of both genders were much more likely to support a woman's right to decide on abortion than were younger elected officials or republicans.

More men than women agree that "a woman's place is in the home" a difference of almost 12%, although the total level of agreement, about 32% among men and just over 20% among women, is surprisingly low, given the traditional political culture of South Carolina. The figures may represent the nature of the sample, elected public officials. Differences between white men and white women differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. The difference between men who identify as "moderate" and women who identify as "moderate"—29% to 12%—was also statistically significant at the .05 level. Black women and conservative women, on the other hand, are more likely than their male counterparts to agree that a woman's place is in the home, although, among conservatives, the difference was a small 3%.

Finally, a statistically significant difference between men and women is found in levels of agreement with the statement that "hard work pays off." Most respondents agree. The largest gender gap is between older men and women officials, the 53 to 82-year-old age group, where more than 13% fewer women agree that hard work pays off. Among democratic men and women, the difference was almost as great, just over 12%. Among the black men and women, black women are more likely to agree that hard work pays

off; among political conservatives, women were more likely to agree, but only by little more than 1%.

The gender difference on the question of whether hard work pays off may be explained by women's experiences in the paid labor force. Most women are still concentrated in low paying, low mobility, service, and administrative support jobs where, in 1993, they earned about 72 cents for every dollar earned by men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1995). For many working women, the "glass ceiling" continues to serve as a barrier to advancement (Andersen 1993). It is surprising to find that black women were more likely to agree with the statement than black men. This may reflect the more problematic nature of black men's employment when compared with the employment of white men and black women (Feagin and Feagin 1993).

## DISCUSSION

For the most part the data confirm the existence of a gender gap among elected officials in South Carolina. While the extent of the gap does not always reach statistical significance, percentage differences between the attitudes of men and women elected officials are often large. Our results for South Carolina elected officials closely parallel the results obtained by Kelley, Hulbary, and Bowman (1996) in their study of local party activists in the South. Specifically, Kelley *et al.* found that women were generally more liberal than men and that gender differences were greater among democrats than among republicans and greater among whites than among blacks.

For the twelve issues considered in this paper, we found a statistically significant gap for four of the issues, and the gender differences are in the expected direction for the eight remaining issues. Statistically significant differences were found in (1)

addressing social problems to reduce crime, (2) controlling handgun sales, (3) governmental indifference to homosexual relationships among consenting adults, and (4) whether hard work pays off.

We found no significant differences on the issues of hiring preferences. Both genders responded conservatively, although for most of the subgroups, the men are more conservative than the women. While we can expect that black women and men would be less likely than whites to agree with the racial hiring preference statement, black women more than black men agreed. We found no significant differences on the three remaining civil rights issues. However, the gender differences for the total sample and most of the subgroups are in the expected direction. A consistent pattern of responses is discernible when analyzing the civil rights issues. Besides finding that men are more conservative than women, we can note that white men are the most conservative subgroup in their responses, whites are more conservative than blacks, and on four issues, black women are more conservative than black men. Although the proportion of blacks in our sample is too small to draw definitive conclusions ( $N = 34$ , 15.8%), a few remarks are in order.

First, consistent with other studies (Prestage 1991; Welch and Sigelman 1989), we found no statistically significant gender gap among blacks for 11 of our 12 issues. The only exception was found on the "black gains come at white expense" statement. Second, although the gender differences among blacks were in the expected direction for six issues (i.e., women gave more liberal responses than did men), they were in the opposite direction (i.e., women gave more conservative responses than did men) for the other six issues. Whether these results are due to the small sample size (13 black men and 21 black women) or to real differences between black men and women merits further investigation.



## CONCLUSION

The Center for the American Woman and Politics (1988) argues that women have changed government in three ways. According to the center, (1) women public officials are more likely than men to bring citizens into the process, (2) women are more likely to opt for government in public view rather than government behind closed doors, and (3) women are more responsive to groups previously denied full access to the policymaking process. Women expanded antidiscrimination legislation, secured Congressional approval of the Equal Rights Amendment, and enlarged the public policy agenda by focusing public attention on rape, spouse abuse, sexual harassment, child care, and displaced homemakers (Hartmann 1989). According to Alston and Donovan (1991), Congressional women pushed for money for breast cancer research, family and medical leave legislation, pension reform, child-support collection, and a standard deduction for single female heads of households. Thomas and Welch (1991) found that women's priorities focused on children, family, and women's issues, while men's priorities focused on business matters. On the other hand, Ford and Dolan (1996) found that although women in state legislatures focused much of their activity on women's issues, they were also concerned with broader issues such as economic development, labor issues, agricultural, and environmental issues.

The relationship between attitudes and behavior is not always consistent, especially when it comes to elected officials. Public representatives must work with each other, with other public and private officials, and with their constituents. They must form coalitions and compromise to accomplish their goals. The link between attitudes and behavior among elected officials requires further study.

Other factors play a role in public policy decisions that confound the salience of gender differences. For example, Kelley et



al. (1996) claim that partisanship explains a large portion of the variation in political ideology among southern party activists. Gender, although explaining considerable variation in liberalism among Democrats, is less useful in explaining conservatism among republicans. Religious fundamentalism may also affect political attitudes and voting behavior of both women and men. A recent article explores the relationship between conservative Protestantism and the increasingly punitive nature of the criminal justice system (Curry 1996). The growing literature on religious fundamentalism and religious trends in social policy reflects the growing importance of religion in shaping public policy.

## APPENDIX

*There is too much concern in court for criminals.* Agreement is considered a conservative response because it implies the courts are "soft" on criminals. Conservatives believe not only that criminals should pay for their crimes, but that society should be protected from criminals even if it means limitations to individual rights. Disagreement is considered a liberal response because liberals want to assure fair treatment for everyone and protect individual rights even if it means that some lawbreakers may not be convicted or punished.

*Laws covering the sale of handguns should be made more strict.* Disagreement shows the conservative position that individuals must be able to protect themselves and their families from physical threats by others. Conservatives also argue that the second amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear arms, and the government should not infringe on that right. Agreement is a measure of liberalism because liberals believe that arms are not the way to deal with threats to physical safety. Instead, liberals maintain, social programs should be developed to help violence-prone individuals reduce their anger and frustration through improved opportunities for legitimate achievements.

*Addressing social problems is a better way of reducing crime than increasing law enforcement.* Conservatives disagree with the statement because they believe that individuals decide to commit crimes. Therefore, punishment—the cost of committing crime—will deter both offenders and potential. Liberals, on the other hand, agree with the statement because they believe that restructuring society to

achieve an equitable distribution of benefits will eliminate many conditions that produce crime.

*The government should ignore homosexual relationships between consenting adults and Sexual relationships outside of marriage are wrong.* The conservative responses are disagreement with the homosexual measure and agreement with the premarital sex statement. Conservatives support the traditional value of marriage between a man and a woman. Both homosexuality and non-marital sex are seen by conservatives as threats to the marital bond. Liberalism is measured by agreement with the homosexual statement and disagreement with the premarital sex statement. These responses show tolerance for private, consensual sexual activities even if those activities are considered deviant by mainstream society.

*South Carolina should have a legal lottery.* Agreement is a measure of liberal tolerance; voluntary behavior by individuals that does not interfere with others' rights should not be prohibited by the government. Conservatives disagree with the statement because gambling contradicts the traditional value of hard work. There is a sense of immorality and unfairness about a person who obtains wealth easily and quickly without work compared with the person who works long and hard for a moderate reward.

*Unfair preference is given in hiring blacks and Unfair preference is given in hiring women.* Disagreeing with these statements is considered a liberal response because liberals generally support affirmative action. Agreeing with these statements is a conservative response because it implies that affirmative action is considered "reverse discrimination." The term "unfair preference" is often coupled with the notion of hiring quotas in the rhetoric of conservatives.

*Black gains come at white expense.* Liberals disagree with the statement because they focus their attention on expanding equal opportunity for all, rejecting zero-sum conceptualizations of resources. Conservatives agree with this statement because they have traditionally perceived race relations as a "they" versus "we" confrontation (Rose 1990) in which it is presumed that any improvement in the social, economic, or political circumstances of blacks necessarily entails losses for whites. Assuming a society of finite resources, any additional resources secured by blacks would have to be taken away from whites.

*A woman has the right to decide on abortion.* Agreement is a measure of liberalism because liberals support the pro-choice position on abortion. Disagreement is a measure of conservatism because conservatives are likely to support the pro-life position on abortion.

*A woman's place is in the home.* Liberals disagree with the statement because they support the ideology of equal opportunity; all people should be accorded full participation in all spheres of social life. Conservatives agree with the

statement because they strive to uphold traditional gender distinctions. As examples, contemporary conservative groups such as the Promise Keepers and the Eagle Forum promote traditional gender roles for men and women.

*Hard work pays off.* Disagreement is an indicator of liberalism because liberals acknowledge that equal opportunity has not been completely realized, and obstacles to success such as institutional discrimination still affect many Americans, despite the efforts of hard work. Agreement is a measure of conservatism because it implies that the traditional values of hard work and individualism are the crucial determinants of success.

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